

they proved more than enough. Even the Renaissance refused to be amused by a cento of classical imitations written, in mistaken deference to a prejudice of Charles DC, in decasyllabics instead of Alexandrines—the metre whose greatness Ronsard had himself been the first to reveal. For the first time Ronsard had failed.

He was middle-aged now. At Court, after Charles had died haunted by the horrors of Saint Bartholomew and murmuring 'Que de sang!', Henri III, surrounded by his minions, looked coldly on his brother's favourite poet. Colder too had grown the glances of the ladies of the Court—Isabeau de Limeuil, who left him to marry the banker Scipione Sardini, Fran[^]oise d'Estr[&]s of whom he never had more than a kiss. Well for him that he had been growing fonder of the quiet country, of looking after his monks in his priories of Montoire, Croix-val, and Saint-C6me, planting, building, going to law on their behalf. Yet there still remained for him at Court a final passion, the most famous of his life. The dry log, as he humorously put it, burnt more fiercely than the green.

Legend, probably untrue, has told that Catherine de Medicis herself bade the poet sing a new love with less Petrarchan obscurity than he had used towards Cassandre Salviati, less simple rusticity than had befitted Marie Dupin. At all events it was in the year of Saint Bartholo-

mew, 1572, that in the garden of the Tuileries
he sat down
beside the pensive H6lene de Surgeres. It
was to be six
years before he tore himself away and bade
farewell, with
her, to love itself. Like his first love, his last
was half a
stranger—half Spanish by descent; dark and
pale, shiver-
ing even in August, and not beautiful,
though fascinating
when she spoke or danced; for the rest,
prude, Platonist,
z&dprecieuse. Like Cassandre and Marie, she
did not bring